3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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will between parents-in-law and son-in-law. They visit one another regularly, help one another more than the strict letter of custom requires, and are proud of one another. In particular, this positive element in the relationship of affines becomes attached to the brother-in-law (*dakii*); and it is not uncommon for brothers-in-law to be real friends if they live near one another, or belong to allied clans, and if there are no bride-price debts outstanding. In former days a man would protect an affine belonging to another clan from molestation by his own clansmen, in the same way as he protected a kinsman of another clan. I have seen men show deep grief at the death of a parent-in-law or brother-in-law.

On the other hand, the sense of an underlying divergence or even conflict of interests that is so conspicuous in the early stages of a marriage never wholly vanishes. The intercourse of affines always tends to be coloured by the feeling that they might be at strife at any time. This is what makes *deen*, affinity, the arch symbol of all that is most antithetical to *dɔŋam*, consanguinity. A formal distance must be maintained between affines; and the passage of time merely blurs but never obliterates this.

A man must show formal deference to his parents-in-law or their representatives, especially in the early years of marriage, and always in ceremonial situations. When he encounters them, or visits them, he sits down to greet them in the posture of respect—crossed legs (*pɔt nɔba*), bowed and hatless head—adopted before a chief, a high ritual functionary, or an ancestor shrine. He is a 'stranger' in their house and they in his house. He is 'shy' of them, and must be on his best behaviour in their presence. It would be most unmannerly, almost immodest, for father-in-law and son-in-law to eat together. In certain circumstances this attitude is extended to the whole settlement of a father-in-law's clan. For example, one rarely sees a respectable Tongo elder eating bought porridge publicly in the market at Ba'ari or Sii. Partly it is unbecoming for the head of a family, as people might gossip, saying that he had no food at home. But the main reason is that Tongo people marry men and women from Sii and Ba'ari. A Tongo man thinks of these places as the homes of possible or actual affines, and he would feel very ill at ease eating bought porridge publicly in the presence of an affine. When a man's parents-in-law or their representatives come on a visit to his house, he must show them honour (*giem ba*). The officious hospitality showered on a visiting father- or mother-in-law, or anybody representing them, by a son-in-law, and vice versa, makes a totally different impression from the friendly welcome offered to a kinsman from another settlement.

Affines have no axiomatic ties. Their relationship rests on a well-defined jural compact. Their parallel interests in the woman who links them, and in her children, are clearly differentiated. This means that a son-in-law has to make special efforts to keep the goodwill of his

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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PLATE 8

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a. A domestic sacrifice of fowls, guinea-fowls, and beer. The head of the joint family is addressing the shrine, which occupies a recess in his senior wife's *Dug*

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b. Omara and his four youngest daughters—each the daughter of a different wife—having a snack at mid-day

[facing p. 129]

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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PLATE 10

516
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a. Kinship patterns are not specific in public etiquette or domestic intercourse. An unposed group having a rest in the middle of the day. From left to right: *Kpana Tey*, his daughter-in-law, his grandson, and his youngest child

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b. A father eating with his youngest son while his oldest son lounges beside them (Hill Talis)

[facing p. 193]

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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ficial symbolism is transparent. What they mean is that a child may not be equated with his or her father while he is alive. As we have observed, though these taboos do not occur among non-Namoos, the ideas and sentiments they express are as frankly admitted by them as by Namoos. It was a Tenzugu (Talis) man who gave me the clearest statement I obtained on the struggle between the Destinies (*Yina*) of father and son. I remember also being struck by this during the ceremony of exorcising the evil Predestiny of Sinkawol of Kpata'ar's wife. Just as the most important rite of all was begun somebody noticed that Tiezien, Sinkawol's proxy father, was absent. Nyaaŋzum, Sinkawol's proxy grandfather and Tiezien's proxy father, shouted for Tiezien to come out of the homestead. Tiezien shouted back, in some anger, 'No, I won't come. They are exorcising my daughter-in-law's *Yin* and I should be there? Oh no. Is she your (plural) wife or mine? No, it is not for me to be there.' There was a moment's pause and then Nyaaŋzum called back, 'Well, leave it then, you are right.' The point was that a man must not equate himself with his son, particularly where the latter's procreative status is concerned. But grandfather and grandson are equated with each other, as we shall see more fully later. And by the same principle a woman must not be equated with her daughter in her reproductive capacity. Thus when a man's daughter becomes a mother for the second or third time he gives up sleeping with her mother even if she is still of child-bearing age. Tallensi call this an important taboo. It is significant also that among both Namoos and non-Namoos an analogous taboo to that of the father's granary holds between a mother and her first-born daughter. While her mother is alive a girl may not uncover her mother's chief storage-pot (*u pu ŋugəl u ma doko*). This taboo is not stressed so much as those that discriminate a child from its father, as might be expected in a society so thoroughly organized around the patrilineal line. But it does show that the tension between the generations among the Tallensi is not the product of *patria potestas* only, but arises out of the whole network of the relations between parents and children.

The avoidances of first-born children are not the only customary expression of the tension between the generations. A man and his oldest child do not eat together. 'You and your oldest child do not dip your fingers into the same dish of food together,' the natives say, 'for if you did perhaps his finger-nail might scratch you and that would bring misfortune on both of you.' This prohibition is not subject to ritual sanctions, though the misfortune that would follow the symbolic act of aggression would be of a mystical character. Tallensi share a dish with the youngest child for preference; and it is not an uncommon sight to see a man eating with his youngest child while his oldest son is sitting near by eating separately.

Then there are the restrictions we have already mentioned that must be

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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boys are keenly learning the art of courtship and are experimenting with sex. They have sweethearts (*gab*, pl. *gabnam*), most commonly slightly younger girls of the same clan whom they call 'sisters' in the widest sense. These girls may have serious suitors from other clans, but not being quite ripe for marriage find much more pleasure and excitement in their freer relations with their clan 'brothers'. With them they can indulge in sexual play, not always stopping short of intercourse, without criticism. Now when boys go to visit their sweethearts they often like to have the company of a friend (*zɔ*, pl. *zɔnam*) of about the same age, who has a similar interest in such adventures. For this a boy prefers a friend from another homestead, a not too near classificatory brother, to a close brother. Later on such a pair of friends will help each other in serious courtship, for one cannot carry on a serious courtship without a friend to act as spokesman and go-between. And a distant brother is preferable to a close brother as a friend in affairs of the heart. It helps to keep them secret from the other members of one's family, and that is desirable because it is a point of honour with every young man to find a wife for himself. The same motives operate with girls between the ages of about 13 and marriage at 16 to 18 years of age. A girl likes going to market with a girl friend of about her own age who is equally interested in the young men around. But if a girl is thinking of eloping with a suitor she prefers to confide in her mother or her clan-brother sweetheart. Having no rights in the bride-price they will—for a bribe from the suitor—help her to get away, whereas her own brothers will insist on a marriage by arrangement so as to make sure of the bride-price.

But the divergence of interests and companionship in the years immediately preceding and following adolescence does not disturb the personal intimacy and attachment of *soog* siblings. Custom prescribes that husband and wife should eat separately. So a man eats with one or two of his younger children, and each of his wives eats with one of her younger daughters or an infant. The other children are divided up, one dish of porridge to this pair of boys or that pair of girls or even to a girl and a boy. They may be full siblings or half-siblings, and the porridge they are eating on a particular occasion may be of their mother's co-wife's cooking. Nevertheless, every child continues to think of his own mother as the food-giver and of his *saarɔt* as those with whom he automatically shares food. A boy of 12 does not sleep in his mother's room, yet he still regards her as the source of his sense of emotional security. In a small and harmonious polygynous family the children are almost equally at home in all the women's quarters, but in a large joint family the children of one woman tend to be in her quarters for most of the time that they are indoors.

Of many other signs of the lasting intimacy of full siblings and their closer identification with each other than with their half-siblings, the

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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PLATE 14

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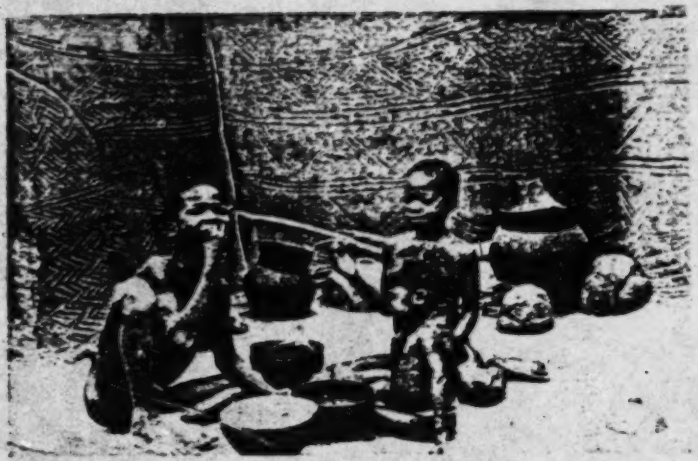

a. Siblings by the same parents have breakfast together. The bigger children are a boy and a girl. Note that they are eating out of the same dish

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b. Successive (*nyaar*) sons brothers

[facing p. 273]

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
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312 natives regard this water as unsuitable for their own consumption, but use it as drinking-water for fowls, for building purposes, and to wash in. There are no special rights of use attached to water-holes, but as a rule each water-hole serves a group of compounds within a radius of not more than 300 yards.

262 A proper meal, according to Tale values, must consist of cooked food; and two meals a day are considered to be necessary for the satisfaction of ordinary needs. When the granaries are full and the women are given grain liberally this standard can be reached, but not in the lean months.

596 The owner of the granary distributes grain periodically to all his wives and those of the householders dependent upon him. He never 261 descends into the granary himself, but appoints a young man, pre- 264 ferably unmarried, to do so, lest the women complain of favouritism. Each woman receives the same measure regardless of her status or of the size of her family. Absolute equality is stressed. Even a young wife without a kitchen receives an equal share. The measure, a small basket or calabash, remains the same throughout the seasons, but the period for which the housewife must make it last varies. When grain is plentiful they receive the measure daily. They will cook food at noon and at sunset, and some will make enough to suffice for the next morning's breakfast. In times of scarcity the same amount of grain has to last two or three days. It is left now to the individual household and family to supplement its food resources as best it can. If a noon meal is cooked at this time, it is made of grain obtained from the ancillary sources we have previously described. Every woman carefully considers her supply, limiting the number of meals so that the family may be assured of the evening meal as regularly as possible.

562 However, shortage of food is not alone responsible for the uncer- 264 tainty of meals. Woman is the pivot of the whole domestic life. She 252 carries on her duties throughout pregnancy till the moment of labour approaches, and again as soon as her period of confinement is over (three or four days). But she is also absolute mistress of her home, and when she refuses to cook her husband cannot compel her to. Nevertheless, a woman will miss cooking a meal only for very good reasons, e.g. when she has been working in the fields late, sowing or harvesting, or beating the floors of the compound, or has been away

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
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PLATE IV

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3. At Breakfast: Father and Children
(The man is eating with his 'youngest' child)

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4. The host provides a meal for collective labour invited to help build his house

[facing p. 265]

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
FE11 Tallensi FE11

for firewood. A woman with a small child never omits to cook a little for it, whatever the circumstances. The cooking routine also becomes upset under the stress of seasonal activities. When a whole family goes to work at a bush farm or to a fishing expedition, some groundnuts or dry guinea-corn is taken along to chew, and no cooking will be done until evening.

Each woman is responsible for the provision of meals for her husband and family. In certain situations co-wives co-operate for the common good. Thus when building operations take place, or a man has hired or 'invited' labour the co-wives cook in turn to provide food for the men. On such occasions the owner of the granary allots a special share of grain for the labourers' porridge to the woman whose turn it is to cook for them.

Mutual assistance between co-wives occurs only when a woman is confined or ill. Then her co-wife (a wife of her husband or his brother) cooks for her and her family. The confined woman provides her own produce and firewood and the cooking is done in her kitchen. This is the duty and prerogative of co-wives. Only as a last resort would the husband's mother or sister cook for her in those circumstances. When a young wife shares her mother-in-law's quarters she does all the household tasks; but when she shares those of a senior wife, they assist each other and cook in turn.

The standard meal of the Tallensi is *sayab ni ziet*, meal porridge and soup. Porridge is prepared of flour and, depending upon the season and what a man has in his grain-store, it is made of early millet, guinea-corn or late millet. Sometimes also maize (generally purchased) or cow-peas or rice is used. When root crops are in season they are cooked instead of porridge, but not because porridge becomes monotonous to the Tallensi, or they wish to vary the diet (see Appendix), it is done in order to make the grain last longer. 'Porridge is food, it makes you strong', and there can never be too much of it is the Tale point of view. 'But if you eat too much of the other things they spoil your belly'.[1]

The preparation of porridge is very simple. Flour is not preserved

[1] A Tale friend enquired what kind of food he would be given in our country, and when told that he would eat meat, fish, bread, and eggs, he exclaimed, 'What, no porridge? I call that starvation.'

a good soup; but no soup is complete without seasonings (*zikuor*). Red pepper (*nanzunh*), the most important, is never omitted from any soup, is added to other dishes too, and even to native beer to give it more punch. Salt (*yaarem*), though very highly valued, is not as indispensable as red pepper. *Ziem* (the ash of valley grasses) or *bakaa* (the ash of early millet stalks) is sometimes substituted for salt or used in addition to it. A much-favoured seasoning is the dawa-dawa seed ball (*kpɔlug*) which is sometimes even used as the foundation of a soup. Usually the seasoning ingredients are all used together; the more pungent the soup the better it is liked. Most women do not keep large supplies of seasonings, but consider it worth while to walk several miles to the nearest market to buy them.

Thus, though the native considers soup merely as a relish for his porridge, it really provides the vegetable and animal food (the latter in very small quantities) which balances a purely cereal diet.

The soup is always put on to cook first. While it is boiling, the woman sweeps out the close (*dendɔŋo*) where the meal is to be eaten, and prepares the vessels for serving it. The preparation and cooking of the soup takes 30–40 minutes. When it is ready she makes the porridge. In all these tasks a woman is assisted by her young daughters. Small boys, too, sometimes give a hand with the fire, but never with the cooking.

As soon as the porridge is ready it is dished up in several calabashes. The housewife takes much trouble in arranging her husband's portion in neat slices—she is less fastidious about the other portions. Each portion of porridge is rubbed over with shea butter; that of the husband's very liberally. This is the most common way in which fat is consumed. After the porridge has been shared out the soup is poured into an equal number of dishes, or sometimes over the porridge. The actual cooking and serving of food, unlike the fetching of wood and water, does not absorb a great deal of the housewife's time. One hour is sufficient to prepare a meal for ten people.

The amount of food consumed per meal differs according to the seasons. When food is scarce, whatever quantity of grain a woman has she will cook, and it will have to suffice; but a Talena never feels satisfied unless he has had about 1½ lb. of porridge at a sitting.

There is no specially appointed eating-place in the compound.

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
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264 Each family eats in its own close, while the man usually eats in that of his senior wife, and his other wives each send him in a dish of food.

252 595 As we have already mentioned, each woman in a polygynous household cooks for the husband and her own family. Their cooking is not synchronized, but as the evening meal is always made at sunset, there is no considerable discrepancy in the time of eating by the different families.

264 The man eats with his 'youngest' child, that is, the last one to have stopped suckling. If he has unmarried brothers dependent upon him they, too, eat with him. A few yards further off his sons—young men and boys—form another group, while the woman herself and the young girls eat apart at the kitchen door. Two women sharing a kitchen eat together. Men and women do not eat together except in circumstances which will be noted later.

A calabash of porridge, a dish of soup, a calabash of drinking-water and another for washing the hands are set down for each group. When the senior member of each group has taken his place the others settle in a circle round the food. In order of seniority each one washes his or her right hand perfunctorily. The eldest member is the first to begin eating, but he is also the first to stop. The youngest member finishes last and is usually encouraged to clear the dish; for an older member to continue eating with the youngest is to invite the ridicule of the others. The food is eaten with the right hand. A piece of porridge is broken off and dipped into the soup with cupped fingers. If meat is present each member breaks off a tiny morsel of it to taste. During the meal the water is passed round for every one to drink. Though each group seated round a dish of food acts independently, those sitting in the same close with the head of the household do not begin before him. Eating is a serious business; there is no conversation at meal-times, and as soon as a group has finished they disperse.

264 595 In addition to sending in food to her husband, a woman sends a dish of porridge with soup to her husband's mother, and a dish to each of her co-wives belonging to her own food economy unit. Thus, each woman has to cook enough for her husband and family and to exchange with every kitchen supplied from the same grain store. This rule, naturally, does not hold for food provided by a woman's

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own efforts in time of scarcity. Each woman cares for her own children only. She keeps food for an absent child, but will offer some to a co-wife's child only if it asks her for it. But the man will give food to all his children. As a rule, he eats the portion sent in by his senior wife and tastes a little from each dish brought in by the others. When he has had his fill he calls his children to come and eat the rest, always remembering those who have not had enough. Thus the discrepancy in the distribution of grain, where each woman gets the same share irrespective of the number of mouths she has to feed, is adjusted by the man in his fair re-distribution of the cooked food.

This general pattern is not a rigid one, but is adapted to the structure of every household and to its special circumstances, e.g. a man would eat with his wife and small children from a common dish if they happened to be alone in the compound. To do so if another wife were present would cause envy and quarrelling between the women; these arrangements are a matter of etiquette and not of taboo.

The natives account for the custom of a man's eating with his 'youngest' child on the grounds that a child must eat properly in order to grow and must be taught to do so. They say, also, that it thus learns to know its father, and not only its mother whom it is always following about. We have not sufficient material to judge the validity of this interpretation; it is quoted here to indicate the native valuation of the sharing of food in the family.

Infants are given morsels of porridge as soon as they can swallow solid food, and by the age of 18 months can feed themselves dexterously. They are weaned by the age of three not by a forcible or harsh separation from the breast, but by gradual habituation to adult food. The emphasis on the adequate feeding of children is shown, also, in the manner in which *sayaksrɔt*, left-over porridge, is reserved for them. Porridge remaining after the noon meal is stirred into the porridge cooked at sunset; if it is left after the evening meal it is given to children cold for breakfast next day. Only after they have eaten their fill will adults have some. In the months of plenty children often have a morning meal of *sayaksrɔt*; at other times a handful of ground-nuts, or a dish of flour-water or of dawa-dawa powder must suffice.

Flour-water (*zɔmkuom*) deserves a note to itself. There are two ways

272 of preparing it. The usual way is to mix the flour with water into a stiff dough, then knead it into a smooth, flat cake (*zɔmgar*), and place it in a calabash which is filled with water. A hasty method consists in merely pouring water over a handful of flour and stirring it up with the hand. This is *zɔmsaka*. As porridge is the ideal food so *zɔmkuom* is the ideal everyday beverage. It is the drink offered to guests, and the regular libation given to the ancestors. It is also food. When the water has been drunk the flour is eaten by adults and children. *Zɔmkuom*, unlike ground-nuts, forms a hasty meal and is resorted to when cooking is inconvenient.

264 Sporadic eating is a universal habit. It goes on in time of plenty
262 because food abounds, and in time of scarcity because one dare not forego an opportunity of eating anything. When the ground-nuts are nearly ripe people pluck a plant from anybody's field and chew the nuts. When grain is abundant a handful is roasted over a fire and eaten at any time of the day. Nevertheless, the Tallensi are capable of going without food for long stretches at a time.

At the ritual and ceremonial gatherings which take place preponderantly in the dry season but intermittently throughout the year, ritual flour-water or cooked food is often passed round, or ground-nuts distributed to the elders present. At the markets, too, particularly in the months of plenty, both porridge and especially the luxury confections such as *kameha* (fried cakes of cow-pea flour) *maasa* (fried millet cakes) and so on are bought in quantities. The small animals and birds, which children hunt and eat, as well as the ground-nuts they glean, belong to this category of food consumption.

Sporadic eating does not, however, in any way affect the domestic organization of the food economy. The housewife never omits to cook a meal because her children found some titbit for themselves, nor will she even question them about it. The Tallensi do not consider such eating as 'food'; not even in the time of scarcity when meals at home become uncertain.

262 Food taboos, on the other hand, react upon the arrangements for the cooking and distributing of the food. Women never cook fowls or dogs, since they avoid eating them. Men therefore cook these animals for themselves. If a woman observes a totemic taboo, her husband cannot compel her to cook the animal she avoids for him, though he

7:Lynn G-5 (1932-1936) 1937 FE11 Tallensi FE11

241 keep pace with the growth in intensity of conditions. Farming is regarded as a custom and not as a business, with the result that in crop production and in animal husbandry the maximum is left to Nature. It is custom based upon an unsettled past which underlies the economic system.

Diet.

262 264 The diet of the people is largely vegetarian; only after religious sacrifice, or upon a very special occasion, is the flesh of cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys or dogs, eaten, subject to certain taboos. Fowls are not eaten by women, or, in some sections, by first-born male children; they are therefore not generally found in a normal diet; guinea-fowls are eaten, however, by all who can afford them. The big meal of the day is consumed in the evening and consists of cereal flour, cowpeas, or Bambarra beans, prepared as a dough or porridge, over which soup made with or without meat, is poured. In the mornings a light meal is taken off anything left-over from the previous evening; similarly at mid-day. When working in the farms at the beginning of the season cereal flour is taken mixed with drinking water. The results of a study of the diet of the Tallensi—a tribe around Tongo in Zuarungu Area—in relation to domestic economy, has been dealt with very fully by Dr. M. and Mrs. S. L. Fortes (9).

Recurrent Food Shortage.

262 251 241 It is not surprising that with a precarious rainfall and almost complete dependence upon cereals, crop yields are very variable and recurrent food shortage is a common experience. Soil erosion, and a system of continuous cultivation with inadequate manuring, have reduced the bulk of farmed land to a basic minimum of fertility, except in the immediate vicinity of compounds. The food problem is further complicated by a natural improvidence of the people whereby all crops are consumed in the year they are produced. In good years a surplus of grain is used lavishly in performing religious customs; it is seldom stored against the possibility of a bad season. A rise in the market value of crops at planting time suggests that many people are so improvident as not even to save sufficient seed for planting.

Famine Foods.

222 261 A reduced supply of cultivated foods in a poor season is eked out by food from wild sources. There is scarcely a single tree in populated areas which has not some value in this respect; and the seed of an indigenous grass, "Gonongo" (Nankani) (Dactyloctenium aegyptium), is laboriously collected and used as grain.